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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Bureau of Biological Survey

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Wildlife Research and Management Leaflet ES-26

Washington, D. C.

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November 1935



DIRECTIONS FOR POISONING PINON JAYS

Prepared in Section of Food Habits, Division of Wildlife Research

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The pinon jay, also known as squawker, pinon squawker, blue crow, and cedar bird, at times does considerable damage to corn (maize) and wheat in some sections of the Rocky Mountain States. Damage occurs mainly in fields near the pinon-cedar covered hills that form the natural abode of these birds. In such sections isolated fields of grain in close proximity to the hills are almost certain to be damaged, while fields in the center of broad agricultural areas seldom are visited by the birds. Consequently the problem of controlling the pinon jay is associated most frequently with the small and pioneer ranch and is especially serious in areas of narrow creek valleys.

Corn is sometimes damaged in the roasting-ear stage, but serious loss seldom occurs until it is ripe enough to be readily shelled off by the birds. Upon first entering a cornfield, the jays are likely to scatter, but within a few days they are inclined to settle down to a definite section of the field where they have previously opened ears, and to return again and again to that spot. That is the place to carry out effective poisoning operations, and, until such a feeding area is established, it is useless to distribute poisoned bait.

Effective poisoning during the period when wheat is in the shock is more difficult and is complicated by the fact that at that time mourning doves are extremely abundant, feeding in the stubble while the jays are feeding both on the shock and in the stubble. Baits placed in wheat stubble are sure to kill large numbers of doves. As yet, no method that is both effective and economical has been discovered for placing suitable baits on shocks. The extent of damage to wheat is not so great as to warrant expensive control measures.

Pinon jays are not protected by Federal law, but before undertaking poisoning operations attention should be paid to protective State laws and care should be taken to comply with State and local regulations relating to the use of poisoned baits.

Preparation of the Poisoned Bait

Use as a base whole shelled corn, well cured and dry, if it can be obtained, and powdered strychnine alkaloid as the poison. The poison is applied to the outside of the grain in a mixture with starch paste. The



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proportions of these elements for varying quantities of bait are:

<u>Shelled corn</u>	<u>Strychnine alkaloid</u>	<u>Starch paste</u>	<u>Glycerin</u>
5 quarts	1/4 ounce	1/2 pint	1/2 tablespoon
10 "	1/2 "	1 "	1 "
20 "	1 "	1 quart	2 tablespoons

Make a starch paste by dissolving a quantity of ordinary laundry starch in a little cold water and stir well as enough boiling water is added to make the paste of the consistency of ordinary cream. To the quantity of strychnine required add a like bulk of this starch paste and mix thoroughly; then add enough more of the paste and the glycerin to make up the quantity needed. After stirring well, pour this poison mixture over the corn in a box or tub and mix thoroughly until the kernels are evenly coated. Let the bait dry for a few hours or over night before using. Poisoned grain thus prepared will withstand a shower or two, but exposure to prolonged or repeated rains will cause it to lose its effectiveness.

#### Distributing the Bait

The poisoned grain should be scattered in stands of corn by taking a handful at a time and, holding it either to one side or behind, letting it filter slowly through the fingers while walking at a moderate pace between the rows. One handful of shelled corn thus spread will cover about 40 linear feet in the row, and, except in small fields, poison scattered in every other row is sufficient. Usually 5 to 10 quarts of poisoned grain will cover the damaged section. These baits should not be placed in fields to which turkeys, ducks, geese, and young chickens have access. Chickens possess a marked immunity to strychnine poisoning but the other birds mentioned are susceptible and must be kept out of baited fields. When the bait is scattered as directed there is no danger to stock that subsequently may be pastured in the fields.

